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IRREGULAR SCHOOLS FOR NURSES

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NOTWITHSTANDING the fact that irregular schools for teaching the art of nursing the sick have called forth remonstrances from nurses and people interested in nursing from all parts of the country, such schools continue to increase in number and importance.

We are all familiar with the system of sending pupils out of the hospital for private duty to increase its revenue.

Correspondence schools lie in wait all over the country to trap the unwary or to attract those who still hope to find a "royal road to learning."

Added to these we have still another form in the so-called schools for domestic nurses. The idea originated in Philadelphia some years ago when, according to newspaper reports, it has "met with such gratifying recognition and support that its waiting-list now numbers fourteen hundred candidates and the school recently received a bequest of one million dollars to extend its usefulness."

A similar school has recently been organized in Albany under the auspices of the Home and Training-School for Christian Workers, and is affiliated with the Philadelphia school.

An attractive and very plausible circular of information announces the fact to the general public that such a course is available. The name "Albany School for Nurses" is printed across the centre of a blue cover in large black letters. At the top is the quotation, "The love of Christ constraineth us," and in the space below a red cross appears. One is almost tempted to exclaim, "Another evil done in the name of religion!"

Further investigation assures the reader that at the expiration of ten weeks, with the aid of a certain number of lectures by physicians, surgeons and others, without patients or practical experience, its pupils are graduated, receive their diplomas with all the ceremonies and publicity of a regularly-established school, adopt a uniform, have themselves photographed in a group for the newspapers, and are launched upon a long-suffering but credulous public to swell the crowd of half-educated, ill-trained incapables already flowing from such sources and flooding the land. It would be laughable were it not so lamentable.

The Home and School for Christian Workers was incorporated in 1890 under a law passed in 1848, and includes in its departments of work missionary, music, physical culture, and the School for Nurses, which is a recent addition.

The departments of service in the school are as follows: School for Nurses, District Work, Directory for Nurses, Home for Nurses, Nurses' Supply, Dietary.

Two courses of study are open to students—a short course of ten weeks, and a long course covering a period of two years, with an optional third year.

The short course consists of day and evening classes, and lectures, including instruction in anatomy, physiology, bacteriology, materia medica, hygiene and sanitation, dietetics, the principles of nursing, accidents and emergencies, observation of patients, obstetrics, gynæcology, care of children and diseases of childhood, contagious and infectious diseases, insanity, general medicine and general surgery. Lectures are also given on the care of diseases of the eye, ear, nose and throat, skin diseases, and the use of electricity.

The head nurse, Miss Manning, a graduate of the Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, conducts the quizzes on the doctors' lectures and gives a large number of lectures of her own, including special instruction in trained elementary nursing, massage and passive exercises. A graduate of a scientific cooking-school is also expected to lecture on dietetics. For their operating-room experience the class was taken to the large operating-room in one of the large hospitals in this city (the name of which is at present unknown to us) and given thorough instruction in regard to operations and the preparation of patient and nurse for them. This was subsequently illustrated by seeing operations performed. It seems that the students in this school must be endowed with marvellous powers of intellect, for under no other conditions could such a vast amount of knowledge be acquired in a period of time so short. Many of the best physicians and surgeons in the city are on its lecture course, thereby giving it their recognition and support, and making themselves directly responsible for conditions that can never be a credit to the nursing profession.

Candidates wishing to obtain the course of instruction must make application in their own hand-writing on a blank furnished by the school, and give two good references as to character. The class is limited to about forty for convenience of instruction and practical teaching. Apparently there are no other requirements for admission to this course. The school reserves the right to drop from the membership of the classes

unsuitable persons, those who attend irregularly or do not show satisfactory evidence of ability and character. The course is open to all classes of women, and makes no distinction in regard to religion, race or condition. A registration fee of one dollar must accompany the application, and the cost of tuition for the term of ten weeks is fifteen dollars, payable in advance. A further charge of five dollars is made for examinations and diploma. Students live at their own homes or in boarding-houses, the expense of which depends upon their personal habits and tastes.

The long course covers practically the same course of instruction extended over a longer period, with demonstrations (when possible), practical work, and actual nursing in the homes of the poor. Requirements for admission to this course are similar to those of other schools, with the exception of the age limit, which extends from eighteen to forty years. Pupils receive board, lodging and washing "under healthful, wholesome, Christian influences," according to the circular, and in addition to this a cash allowance of eight dollars per month for the first year, ten dollars for the second, and twelve dollars for the third.

It is not our intention to depreciate the work done by any organization that has for its object the relief or betterment of conditions surrounding the poor and needy, and some knowledge of the simpler practical parts of nursing would no doubt greatly increase the usefulness of home missionaries. But the establishment of separate and distinct schools giving in ten weeks, or even longer periods, a course of instruction covering all the subjects taught in legitimate schools during two or three years of actual service, without practical experience, the lack of which makes any amount of theoretical knowledge, a "crude and unprofitable mass," is preposterous. How many members of the medical profession would accept a system so faulty for its students? And where are the patients who would accept the services, at any price, of physicians or surgeons of only ten weeks' experience? And yet the one proposition is no more rational than the other. I quote from the catalogue some arguments in favor of the short-course system: "It teaches the art of nursing in ten weeks—the heart of the art.

"There are evening and day courses, each complete in itself, and supplemented by visitation and nursing among the poor. It is not the long hospital course. It is more practical for home work. It covers a field not heretofore occupied. It takes the essential scientific facts of nursing and simplifies them—presents them in a clear way easily understood.

"It is thorough as to instruction. Its course is compact, not curtailed; practical, not theoretical; sufficient, not exhaustive.

"It has embodied in its course of study, and in the opportunities for practical work every essential feature of the best known and best-appointed schools. It is all clear wit and grit for the sick room. It cultivates self reliance and shows how to make the best use of the things that are at hand. The school is a preceptor in how to do much with little. It deals with how to do things that need to be done in every sick room, *every emergency of injury*. Its mission is too noble to be put into words. Its ethics too evident to be discussed."

Great stress is laid upon the comparatively small rate of charges made by these women. The regularly trained nurse of the present day, they tell us, is a luxury for the rich, quite forgetting or ignoring the great body of earnest women giving trained service to the sick poor, not only in district and settlement work, but among those who form the great industrial classes, either gratuitously or at rates quite within the range of their possibilities. The love of money, however, or the desire to gain it is common to many and the short course will undoubtedly attract the wage-earner anxious to improve her state, as well as the women influenced by the missionary spirit. Having gained independence and a certain amount of practical experience, nothing can prevent such women from fixing the rate of charge at their own valuation of their services.

And that they are not trained exclusively for the benefit of the needy and moderately prosperous another quotation from the circular of information will testify. "Experience has shown that if a nurse can do good work in the homes of the poor her services are acceptable in all homes."

Our experience with women handicapped by the superficial knowledge and inferior practical training given in such schools has shown them to be neither resourceful nor inventive; self assured rather than self-reliant; absolutely useless in cases of emergency, and with unlimited confidence in their ability to do marvellous works.

An Albany surgeon recently found a patient, to whose house he had been called, and about whom he felt some anxiety, in the hands of a nurse of this type. Finding her method of procedure somewhat unsatisfactory, he questioned the young woman rather closely concerning her training, previous experience, ability, etc., to which she replied: "Oh, yes; I've already rescued seven from death." Such use or abuse of the profession of nursing helps us to understand more fully and clearly the great need for higher standards legally established. Nurses who have

the knowledge and skill they profess must be protected against those who only pretend to have acquired that skill. The public who are asked to pay for the care they need in sickness, whether the rate of charge be low or at the customary rate for skilled service, must be protected also from the same evil. And what is of still greater importance, the nursing profession itself must be protected against this great body of women of inferior breeding, education and training, who, whether they undertake domestic or private nursing, pose as nurses, and by their ignorance lower its standards in the eye of the public.

When our pupils are trained from the beginning with the view of entering for state examinations at the end of their course in the hospital, the best women will qualify themselves, first, by securing a good general education, and then enter only the schools where the highest standards obtain. This will do much toward eliminating irregular schools, and with them the incompetent, untrained or poorly trained nurse.

THE CARE OF THE BREASTS IN OBSTETRICAL CASES

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PREFATORY NOTE

It is the desire of the Editor of the Private Nursing department to receive, for use in this place, papers on practical nursing subjects which shall be not scientific treatises, but accounts of cases, describing the nursing care given to patients from the nurse's point of view. There are undoubtedly many private duty nurses who are deeply interested in their work and who are full of ideas concerning it, who would yet hesitate to write articles on their work for fear they might have nothing new or original to offer. Two facts should be borne in mind. First, if we wait to hear from gifted and brilliant women, we shall have very few, if any, papers; for the great majority of us are possessed of only ordinary ability and can, perhaps, enjoy ordinary papers better than too learned ones. Second, when we consider the hundreds of nurses, all over the world, who read the JOURNAL, we are safe in believing that hardly a suggestion can be made which will not prove new and helpful to some one. In the article following, no new ideas are advanced what is written will be an old story to many, but it is hoped that some one who reads it will say to herself, "Why, I know a better way than that!" and that she will not only think this but will share her wider knowledge with us, that all may be benefitted. If the articles published in this department can be thus made a starting-point for questions, answers, and suggestions,—all of which will be considered under the heading, Practical Points,—the exchange of ideas will be helpful to us all.